

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-15 TRSE-00 XMB-04
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R 140850Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1226
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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

UNCLAS HELSINKI 0743

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, FI
SUBJECT: SLIGHT PROGRESS MADE IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (A) HELSINKI 0675, (B) HELSINKI 0598

1. FINNISH LABOR SITUATION APPEARS TO BE EASING SOMEWHAT FOLLOWING DEVALUATION (REF A). NOT ONLY HAVE AGREEMENTS WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN REACHED SURVIVED INTACT, BUT ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS HAVE BEEN CONCLUDED IN RECENT DAYS ON ESSENTIALLY SAME TERMS AS BEFORE DEVALUATION. ACCORDING TO STK EMPLOYER FEDERATION, TOTAL OF 700,000 WORKERS -- NEARLY HALF OF THOSE TO BE COVERED BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS -- HAVE NOW SIGNED CONTRACTS, ALL OF WHICH FALL WITHIN LIINAMAA GUIDELINES.

2. IF DEVALUATION HAS HAD ANY IMPACT ON LABOR MARKET, IT SEEMS TO HAVE HAD BENEFICIAL EFFECT OF REMOVING ONE MAJOR UNCERTAINTY - OVER EXCHANGE RATE - WHICH HAD CLOUDED BARGAINING ATMOSPHERE. THERE ARE POSITIVE SIGNS THAT MAJOR INDUSTRIAL UNIONS, INCLUDING LEADING METAL WORKERS, ARE NOW PREPARED TO MAKE MORE EARNEST EFFORT REACH SETTLEMENT
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WITHIN LIINAMAA LINES.

3. PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS HAVE SOMEWHAT ALLEVIATED STRIKE SITUATION (REF B), ALTHOUGH LABOR UNREST CONTINUES TO BE FELT. ICEBREAKER CREWMEN SETTLED WITHOUT STRIKE AND SOME OTHER THREATENED STRIKES HAVE BEEN AVERTED OR POSTPONED. HOWEVER, UNPOPULAR ELECTRIC STRIKE CONTINUES

AND HAS RESULTED IN INDUSTRIAL LAYOFFS TOTALING 13,000
AND THREAT OF LOCKOUT BY POWER COMPANIES OF THOSE TECHNI-
CIANS NOT ON STRIKE. STRIKE BY TRANSPORT WORKERS HAS
DISRUPTED BUS SERVICE IN MUCH OF COUNTRY AND THREATENS
CREATE FOOD SHORTAGES, WHICH MIGHT BE FURTHER AGGRAVATED
BY DAIRY AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS STRIKES THREATENED FOR MID-APRIL.

4. DESPITE WORK STOPPAGES, MOOD OF LABOR MARKET APPEARS
MORE OPTIMISTIC THAN IN RECENT WEEKS. SAK LABOR FEDERA-
TION CHAIRMAN OIVIO IN CALL ON AMBASSADOR APRIL 12
DESCRIBED SITUATION AS DEVELOPING FAVORABLY. STK LIKEWISE
EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE THAT GENERAL SOLUTION CAN BE REACHED
ALONG LIINAMAA LINES. ALTHOUGH MAJOR CHALLENGES TO SUCH
SETTLEMENT REMAIN - INCLUDING COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION'S
INSISTENCE ON SUBSTANTIAL WAGE HIKES - MANAGEMENT AND
LABOR SEEM TACITLY COMMITTED TO CONTINUED PROGRESS.
HOUSTON

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